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# BUILDING A SAFER CANADA EFFECTIVE PLANNING FOR CRIME PREVENTION

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## OVERVIEW

Prevention policies and practices are proven to reduce crime and victimization, and to improve our well-being. This report argues that a key element of success is *effective planning*. It identifies a series of step-by-step tasks in a problem-solving planning exercise, and describes some of the knowledge, skills and resources required to plan effectively. A great deal more should be invested in supporting effective planning for crime prevention. This is what it will take to make prevention work.

## INTRODUCTION

Safety is a vital component of our quality of life. Our police and criminal justice systems play an essential role in helping to achieve these goals, and we should continue to do everything we can to help make them more responsive, efficient and effective.

However, there are no easy solutions to the problems of crime and victimization, and little evidence that simply relying on more enforcement and more punishment will significantly increase our individual and collective safety. The mandates of the police, the courts and the corrections systems, and the knowledge, skills and resources at their disposal, limit their capacity to address all the factors related to crime or victimization. In the face of the challenges posed by economic downturns,

demographic transitions and increasing diversity, there is only so much the justice system, even at its best, can do!

There is also a convincing body of evidence that prevention is an effective way to move forward. The concern is that Canada is not doing enough to make the best use of this knowledge and expertise - we need a sustained commitment to doing more to translate proven approaches into common practice.

The challenge is to provide some tools that might help us translate this knowledge into practice in an effective and user-friendly manner. This brief report attempts to help in this area by proposing an approach to strategic planning for those involved in prevention initiatives.

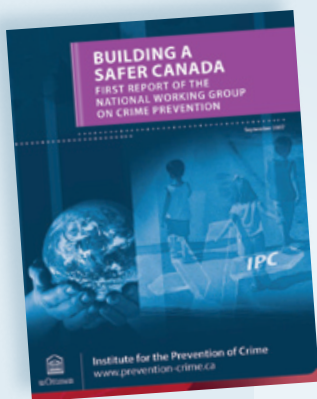
## THE INSTITUTE FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRIME (IPC)

The Institute for the Prevention of Crime (IPC) was established at the University of Ottawa in 2006. Its mission is to improve Canada's capacity to acquire and use the best evidence about what works to prevent crime and about how to implement and sustain proven or promising practices. Readers can obtain more information about the IPC by visiting our website at [www.ipc.uOttawa.ca](http://www.ipc.uOttawa.ca)

Two particular initiatives of the IPC are relevant to crime prevention planning exercises. The first is the work of the National Working Group on Crime Prevention (NWG). Its goal is to help decision-makers use the expertise of researchers and practitioners to develop a more comprehensive and sustainable crime prevention strategy for Canada.

The NWG released a report on *Building a Safer Canada* in 2007. It argued that a more effective approach must include five key elements:

1. A shared vision of how prevention can help, with an action plan and responsibility centres to carry out the work;
2. A willingness and a capacity to concentrate resources where they are most needed;
3. A reliance on evidence-based approaches;
4. Adequate and sustained resources; and
5. An informed and engaged public.



[www.ipc.uOttawa.ca](http://www.ipc.uOttawa.ca)

Some progress has been made in each of these areas, but a great deal more needs to be done. The NWG's report makes a number of recommendations for how we might move forward. Readers are invited to consult the report for further details.

The second initiative is the National Municipal Network for Crime Prevention (NMN), which brings together community safety officials from 14 municipalities across Canada. The NMN recently released *Making Cities Safer: Action Briefs for Municipal*

*Stakeholders* (2009). These are designed to provide a set of user-friendly tools for municipal decision-makers and practitioners. They also include links to key resources, and identify a number of proven or promising initiatives in an attempt to inform and inspire local action. They are a resource that anyone involved in crime prevention should consider consulting at [www.ipc.uOttawa.ca](http://www.ipc.uOttawa.ca)



## A FRAMEWORK FOR PREVENTION PLANNING

The purpose of this report is to illustrate how the capacity elements identified in the above two documents can form the basis of a practical problem-solving approach for crime prevention planning.

The approach involves answering five inter-connected series of questions. The idea is that, in answering these questions, some of the key issues in designing, implementing and evaluating a prevention initiative will be addressed. The five steps are as follows

### 1. Understanding the problem and developing a vision, an action plan and responsibility centres

The planning process should begin with a clear definition of the nature and size of a problem, an awareness of the many factors that feed into it, and a vision of how prevention could help improve the situation. The next step is to develop a results-oriented action plan that identifies measurable impact goals and intermediate benchmarks. This will help to assess whether progress is being made and whether changes to the action plan are required. A framework for collaboration among various orders of governments and among the different sectors and partners involved should also be developed. Finally, a decision must be made about who will lead and coordinate the process. This centre of responsibility will be charged with identifying priorities for action, coordinating the partners in an initiative, and monitoring outputs and evaluating outcomes.

Thus, an effective strategic planning process must begin by addressing the following questions:

1. What is the problem – how is the harm in question to be defined and measured? Have different voices and perspectives been heard and taken into account?
2. What are the factors that contribute to the creation of this problem, and which of these are amenable to intervention?
3. What are the short and longer term priorities and goals of the initiative, and what role can crime prevention play in achieving these goals? The challenge is to balance the desire for short term successes with a longer term impact on the factors related to the problem being addressed.
4. What will be the action plan – what type of program content will be adopted, and how will the initiative be delivered? Who will do what, and what types of collaboration and partnerships will be required?
5. What type of responsibility centre will be put in charge of administering and managing this process, and how will those involved be held accountable for their contribution?

Readers are encouraged to consult Action Briefs 1.3 – *Take Responsibility* and 1.4 – *Plan Strategically* for further guidance on these issues (visit [www.ipc.uOttawa.ca](http://www.ipc.uOttawa.ca)).

## 2. Concentrating resources

Crime and victimization are highly correlated with certain individual and social characteristics, and tend to be concentrated in certain places and in certain types of social situations. We must concentrate our scarce resources where they are the most needed and will have the greatest impact. The key is to develop better diagnostic and evaluation tools, especially for municipal or local planning and action. There are a number of data sources that can be used, such as census data and community profiles, police statistics, victimization surveys, self-report surveys, and local safety audits. Providing more access to user-friendly data as well as more technical assistance to frontline practitioners is crucial.

An effective planning process must address the following questions:

1. What diagnostic tools will be used to identify the nature and extent of the problem, and help us track its evolution over time?
2. Are there existing data sources that could be used? Will new tools need to be developed?
3. Is the data available in a user-friendly form? If not, are there sources of technical assistance that can help overcome this problem?

## 3. Relying on evidence-based approaches

We need to make better use of what has worked in crime prevention, and to invest much more in research, development and training. We must use the same discipline that characterizes decision-making in sectors such as health. This requires a commitment to finding what works and doing it, and a corollary willingness to root out ineffective investments and divert the resources elsewhere. We must also pay more attention to the issue of resistance to innovation and the challenges associated with organizational change.

An effective planning process must address the following questions:

1. What can we learn from research and practice in the area in question: what causal factors have been successfully addressed, and what tools or approaches have proven to be successful or promising? What has not worked?
2. What are the gaps in our knowledge? Such gaps should become priorities for research and the development of model projects in the future.
3. How will the initiative be monitored and evaluated? In general, evaluation is most useful to inform practice when new or innovative approaches are being tested. Monitoring and auditing are essential to the effective administration and governance of problem-solving collaborations – they may well be sufficient if the approach being used has been tested and proven elsewhere, but local context must always be taken into account.

4. What are the sources of resistance to innovation or organizational change, and what lessons have been learned about how to address these?

#### 4. Assuring adequate and sustained supports

Research demonstrates the successes of prevention-oriented problem-solving when time, money and human resources are invested in appropriately targeted, well implemented and adequately sustained initiatives. We must shift away from an over-reliance on project-based funding, and assure adequate and sustained levels of support to responsibility centres and to prevention initiatives.

At each step of the planning process, specific types of capacity elements are necessary. These include:

- The **knowledge** about what to do at each stage or step, and of how to do it;
- The **skills** to complete the tasks at hand; and
- The physical, financial and human **resources** necessary to assure that an initiative is properly targeted and designed, and implemented as intended and required.

Any initiative must undertake a hard-headed assessment of its current capacity and consider where additional knowledge, skills or resources might be found. We must avoid the error of trying to do too much with too little - reducing crime prevention to only that which is affordable is a recipe for failure.

Readers are also encouraged to consult Action Brief 1.2 – *Invest Smartly* for more suggestions and resources in this area (visit [www.ipc.uOttawa.ca](http://www.ipc.uOttawa.ca)).

#### 5. Informing and engaging the public

Before getting involved in crime prevention initiatives, the public must have a sense that they are able to make a difference, and they must be willing to invest their time and energy in this area.

An effective strategic planning exercise must address the following questions:

1. How can we improve the public's awareness and understanding of the nature of the problem and its consequences, and of the benefits and limitations of different types of solutions?
2. How can we increase the public's support for evidence-based solutions, and their willingness to hold decision-makers accountable for not implementing such approaches?
3. How can we get the public more involved in participating in effective prevention initiatives as clients, participants, and contributors and evaluators?

Readers may want to consult Action Brief 1.5 – *Engage the Public* for more suggestions and resources in this area (visit [www.ipc.uOttawa.ca](http://www.ipc.uOttawa.ca)).

### CONCLUSION

The planning process we have described is summarized in the accompanying Strategic Planning Worksheet. The hope is that readers and users will find this a useful starting point in their attempts to come up with an approach to crime prevention that contributes to an effective solution.

This planning process involves a lot of time and energy, and requires a large number of people and organizations to work collaboratively over an extended period of time. Although challenging, this is what it will take to make prevention work!

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## Assuring adequate and sustained supports throughout crime prevention planning

An effective problem-solving approach to crime prevention planning involves a number of key elements and steps. For each step of the planning process, specific types of capacity elements are necessary if these tasks are to be performed successfully. These include:

- The **knowledge** about what to do at each stage or step, and of how to do it;
- The **skills** to complete the tasks at hand; and
- The physical, financial and human **resources** necessary to assure that an initiative is properly targeted and designed, and implemented as intended and required.

The chart presented on the other side of this page gives an idea of the considerations and challenges in this regard. Any initiative must undertake a hard-headed assessment of its current capacity and a consideration of where additional knowledge, skills and resources might be found. This will help avoid the all too common error of trying to do too much with too little, which can often lead to significant challenges in implementation and jeopardize overall success.

# CRIME PREVENTION: A STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHEET

by Ross Hastings

<b>ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS</b>	<b>CURRENT SITUATION</b> What do we have? What do we know?	<b>GAP ANALYSIS</b> What is missing? What do we need to succeed?	<b>MOVING FORWARD</b> What is next?
<b>FROM PROBLEMS TO SOLUTIONS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will the problem be defined and measured?</li> <li>• What are the contributing risk and protective factors – how will prevention address these factors?</li> <li>• What are the priorities for action in the short and longer terms?</li> <li>• What is the action plan around strategies and program content?</li> <li>• What is the action plan for program implementation?</li> <li>• What type of responsibility centre is required?</li> </ul>			
<b>CONCENTRATE INVESTMENTS ON HIGHEST NEEDS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What diagnostic tools will be used?</li> <li>• Where can the required data and information be found?</li> <li>• Where can technical assistance be obtained?</li> </ul>			
<b>EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACHES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the evidence on proven or promising practices in this area?</li> <li>• What are the gaps in our knowledge (research priorities)?</li> <li>• How will the initiative be monitored and evaluated?</li> <li>• How will resistance to change be addressed?</li> </ul>			
<b>ADEQUATE AND SUSTAINED SUPPORTS AND RESOURCES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do we have the required knowledge and expertise to carry out all required tasks?</li> <li>• Do we have the skills required to carry out all required tasks?</li> <li>• Do we have the physical, financial and human resources required to carry out all required tasks in a sustainable manner?</li> </ul>			
<b>PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What public education initiatives are required?</li> <li>• How can we increase public's support for prevention?</li> <li>• How can the public be encouraged to become actively involved in the initiative?</li> </ul>			